(a) whether, of late, there has been a tremendous increase in the cases of theft of idols, antiques and terracotta paintings from various temples in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof for the last three years and the steps taken to prevent the thefts and smuggling;

(c) whether it is proposed to amend the Antiquities and Arts Treasures Act, 1972 for the purpose of dealing with these offences more effectively; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, a statement showing the cases of theft of idols, antiques etc. from various temples under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India, during the last three years, is enclosed at Annexure [See Appendix 199 Annexure No. 4]. Measures have been drawn up by the Archeological Survey of India in consultation with the enforcing agencies like the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Customs and the State Governments to check the theft of antiquities and their smuggling by stepping up vigilance and intensifying checking at the Customs exit points, as well as by strict enforcement of the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972. Armed guards have also been deployed at selected centrally-protected monuments, museums and temples under the Archaeological Survey of India. Furthermore, apart from its own Watch and Ward staff, the Archaeological Survey of India, also engages the services of private security agencies for protection of the centrally-protected monuments, sculpture sheds and museums, to provide security and keep a watch over the antiquities housed in these monuments, sites, museums and temples.

(c) and (d) It is under consideration.

Opening of tourist offices in Shanghai

992. SHRIMATI SHABANA AZMI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are looking East to shore up its tourist arrivals;

(b) if so, whether a recent Indo-China agreement grants India approved destination status, a pre-requisite for Chinese travel;

(c) whether tour operators have been identified and tourist offices are being opened in Shanghai and other places;

(d) if so, whether remnant hitches were ironed out by tourism officials who visited China after the Prime Minister's visit; and

(e) if so, in what manner the tourist inflow has increased as compared to the last year uptil now?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) A list of tour operators has been received from Chinese Government. Contacts with Travel Trade have also been established during the India Tourism seminars held in China earlier this year. The proposal of opening Tourist Office in China is also being considered.

(d) No official from the Department of Tourism has visited China after the Prime Minister's visit.

(e) As the Approved Destination Status (ADS) Agreement is effective from 1st April, 2003, it is too early to gauge results. However, the feedback received indicates increasing interest among Chinese to visit India.

Modernisation of IGNCA

993. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state the steps taken or proposed to be taken for the modernisation and smooth functioning of Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA)?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): IGNCA is an autonomous body, which can take its own decisions regarding modernisation and other activities. The Government has provided a Corpus Fund of Rs. 50.00 crores and the Trust meets the expenditure on its activities from out of the interest accrued on the Corpus Fund. Further, the Government has also provided a plot of land at Central Vista free of cost and an amount of Rs. 100.00 crores for construction of the IGNCA Building Complex.